Ignoring God's Plain Truth
Rom 1:18-32
SS Lesson for 06/26/2016

Devotional Scripture: Ps 52:1-9

OUTLINE

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OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON
Key Verse: Rom 1:20

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh
Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary
Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary
Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson
The lesson reveals the ways that mankind seems to always be Ignoring God’s Plain Truth. The study’s aim is to avoid the world’s ways of thinking and behaving. The study’s application is to structure our actions and thoughts to reflect God’s truth, resulting in His blessings. (Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rom 1:20
For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The first step in the revelation of the righteousness that God provides for people by faith is to set forth their need for it because they are under God’s judgment. The human race stands condemned before God and is helpless and hopeless apart from God’s grace. This section looks at the human race prior to the call of Abram and the establishment of a special people of God. This situation persisted in the pagan world of the Gentiles as distinct from the Jews. God never condemns without just cause. Here three bases are stated for His judgment of the pagan world. Rom 1:17 serves as a topic sentence for this entire section. In addition, it stands in contrastive parallel to verse 17. The continuing revelation (the verb is being revealed is in the pres. tense) of the wrath of God is an expression of His personal righteousness (which also “is being revealed,” Gr., v. 17) and its opposition to human sinfulness. Therefore people need the continuing revelation of “a righteousness from God” (v. 17) that He provides. God’s wrath is directed against all the godlessness (asebeian, “lack of proper reverence for God”) and wickedness (adikan, “unrighteousness”) of men, not against the men as such. (God’s wrath will also be revealed in the future; cf. 2:5.) God hates sin and judges it, but loves sinners and desires their salvation. Failure to give God His due inevitably results in failure to treat people, created by God in His image, the right way. Conversely, people (in their unrighteousness toward others) continue to suppress (katechontōn, lit., “holding down”) the truth (cf. 1:25; 2:8) concerning both God and man. People had God’s truth but suppressed it, refusing to heed it. And these wicked ones did this in an attitude of wickedness (en adikia). This suppression of the truth is Paul’s first reason for God’s condemnation of the pagan world.

Rom 1:19-20 declare that knowledge concerning God is available to all. This knowledge is called natural revelation because it is seen in the created world, is accessible to the entire human race, and is not soteriological, dealing with salvation effected by Christ. Paul called this knowledge plain (phaneron), which means visible or clear. This is true because God has made it plain (ephanerōsen, the verb related to the noun phaneron). Some scholars translate the phrase to them as “in them,” insisting that verse 19 is speaking of the knowledge of God within the being of man through conscience and religious consciousness. Preferable is the position that verse 19 states the fact of natural revelation and verse 20 explains the process. One support for this view is the word “for” which begins verse 20 and indicates a tie between the verses. “What may be known about God” (v. 19) is now called God’s invisible qualities and identified as His eternal power and divine nature. Since “God is spirit” (John 4:24), all His qualities are invisible to physical eyes and can be understood by the human mind only as they are reflected in what has been made, that is, in God’s creative work. The self-existent God, however, is the Creator of all things, and therefore since the Creation of the world His “invisible qualities” have been clearly seen. Paul may have intended a play on words between the noun translated “invisible qualities” (aorata) and the verb translated “clearly seen” (kathoratai) because they share a common Greek root. Both the verb “clearly seen” and the participle “being understood” are in the present tense, which emphasizes the continuous nature of the action. The word theiotēs, translated “divine nature,” occurs only here in the New Testament and embraces the properties which make God God. Creation, which people see, reveals God’s unseen character—the all-powerful Deity. An Old Testament parallel to these verses is Psalm 19:1-6. Paul’s conclusion to this description of natural revelation is important—men are without excuse. The witness to God in nature is so clear and so constant that ignoring it is indefensible. Their condemnation is based not on their rejecting Christ of whom they have not heard, but on their sinning against the light they have.
This reason for God’s condemnation of the pagan world builds on the preceding one just as that one built on the first. The relationship is seen in the use of the same Greek connective (dioti) at the beginning of verses 19 and 21, in the latter translated for. People’s suppression of the truth is seen in their rejecting the clear evidence of God as the sovereign Creator and their perversion of that knowledge into idolatry. The clause although they knew God refers to an original experiential knowledge of God such as Adam and Eve had both before and after the Fall. How long this knowledge of God continued before it was perverted is not stated, but God was known by people. This fact makes human actions all the more reprehensible. One would suppose that to know God would be to honor Him, but these people neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him. They turned from the very purpose for which God made them: to glorify Him for His Person and thank Him for His works. With such willful rebellion against God it is little wonder that their thinking became futile (emataiōthēsan, lit., “became worthless, purposeless”; cf. Eph. 4:17) and their foolish (asynetos, “morally senseless”; cf. Rom. 1:31) hearts were darkened (cf. Eph. 4:18). When truth is rejected, in time the ability to recognize and to receive truth is impaired (cf. John 3:19-20). When the true Source of wisdom is rejected (cf. Ps. 111:10), people’s claim to be wise is an idle boast.

Progressively they became fools (emôranthēsan, lit., “became stupid”), a reality demonstrated by the worship as gods of idols in the forms of people and animals (cf. Rom. 1:25). The ultimate irony in humanity’s refusal to glorify the true God is the insanity or stupidity of idolatry described in Isaiah 44:9-20. Man’s refusal to acknowledge and glorify God leads to a downward path: first, worthless thinking; next, moral insensitivity; and then, religious stupidity (seen in idol-worship). In a real sense the results of God’s condemnation on rebellious humanity are nothing more than the natural consequences of suppressing truth, ignoring revelation, and perverting God’s glory. However, God did more than simply let nature take its course. God acted to abandon (the thrice-mentioned “gave them over” [vv. 24, 26, 28] is paredōken, “abandoned”) people to expressions of a corrupt lifestyle that deserved God’s wrath and the sentence of death (v. 32).

One aspect of mankind’s corruption (to which God actively let people go) was sexual profligacy. The frequency of live-in lovers, wife-swapping, and group sex parties today only confirms this result of God’s abandonment. Sex within marriage is a holy gift from God, but otherwise sex is impurity (lit., “uncleanness”) and the degrading of... bodies by using them contrary to God’s intent. In a sense verse 25 repeats the truth of verse 23, but it expresses more. The truth of God is not only the truth concerning God but also God’s truth concerning all things, including mankind. This truth is that people are creatures of God and can find true fulfillment only in worshiping and obediently serving God the Creator. A lie (lit., “the lie”) on the other hand says that the creature—angelic (Isa. 14:13-14; John 8:44) or human (Gen. 3:4-5)—can exist independent of God, self-sufficient, self-directing, and self-fulfilling. Mankind made himself his god in place of the true God. Because God the Creator is forever praised (in contrast with creatures who are undeserving of worship), Paul added Amen. This word transliterates in both Greek and English the Hebrew word meaning “so let it be.” As an affirmation, not a wish, it places approval on what has just been said (2 Cor. 1:20).

Also God gave them over to shameful lusts (lit., “passions of disgrace”). This involved, as the text states, both sexes engaging in homosexual instead of heterosexual relationships. Women deliberately exchanged natural relations (with men in marriage) for unnatural ones (with other women). This is the second “exchange” the unregenerate made (cf. v. 25). Men... were inflamed with lust (orexi, “sexual lust,” used only here in the NT and differing from the more common word for lust in v. 26). The words translated women and men in these verses are the sexual words “females” and “males.” Contemporary homosexuals insist that these verses mean that it is perverse for a heterosexual male or female to engage in homosexual relations but it is not perverse for a homosexual male or female to do so since homosexuality is such a person’s natural preference. This is strained exegesis unsupported by the Bible. The only natural sexual relationship the Bible recognizes is a heterosexual one (Gen. 2:21-24; Matt. 19:4-6) within marriage. All homosexual relations constitute sexual perversion and are subject to God’s judgment. Such lustful and indecent acts have within them the seeds of punishment (due penalty).

Pagan humanity’s rebellion also included the rejection of the knowledge (epignōsei, “full knowledge”; cf. v. 32) of God. In a sense they put God out of their minds. God’s responding judgment was abandonment (cf. vv. 24, 26) to a depraved (adokimon, “disapproved”) mind, which expressed itself in attitudes and actions that ought not to be done (lit., “what is unfitting or improper,” a technical Stoic word). The mental vacuum created by dismissing God was filled (the perf. tense implies filled full) with four forms of active sin: wickedness (adikia; cf. v. 18), evil (ponēria), greed, and depravity (kakia, “badness or malice”). These four in turn express themselves in 17 more specific types of wickedness. The first two, envy and
murder, sound much alike in Greek: *phthonou* and *phonou*. Also the four vices in verse 31 each begin with the Greek letter alpha (“a” in Eng.). This whole pattern of evil becomes the lifestyle of people who **continue to do** (pres. tense implies continuing or habitual action) **these very things** in open defiance of God, a defiance aggravated (a) by fully knowing (*epignontes*; cf. v. 28) that **such things deserve death** and (b) by encouraging others in the same lifestyle. Such extremity of human rebellion against God fully warrants God’s condemnation.

**Lesson Introduction and Background**

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The words "Accept No Substitutes" is a classic slogan in advertising. Many businesses try to persuade us that their products are original, genuine, the best. Of course, in some cases we cannot tell the difference between the so-called genuine item and a substitute. We occasionally may conclude that the substitute offers better value. But in many instances, we avoid substitutes and insist on “the real thing.” Today’s text is about life’s most important choice regarding the genuine and substitutes. Our text insists that the one, true God is clearly revealed to all people. None can rightly say that they have no knowledge of the true God. Tragically, however, we see how people ignore the true God and accept substitutes. That choice is tragic because it leads to the degradation and disharmony that ruin lives. More seriously, it also leads to eternal punishment.

Our lesson text comes from Paul’s letter to the Romans, probably written from the city of Corinth during his third missionary journey, in about AD 58. The church in Rome had been planted by others many years before, and Paul sought the Roman Christians’ support as he planned to travel to Spain (Romans 15:23-28). The nature of the church in Rome was influenced by an edict, issued by Emperor Claudius in about AD 49, that had forced Jews living in the city to leave (Acts 18:2). The Roman historian Suetonius tells us that Claudius “banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus,” the word Chrestus likely referring to Christ. This experience probably fostered a certain division within the Roman church between Gentile and Jewish believers, with each group contending that it had better claim on salvation in Christ than did the other (compare Romans 11:13-24). The expulsion of Jews from Rome resulted in Gentile Christians being in the majority in the church there, if they had not been the majority already (Romans 1:5, 6, 13). Their majority status seems to have continued even after the death of Claudius in AD 54 allowed Jews to return to the imperial city (compare Acts 18:2 with Romans 16:3-5a). Much of Paul’s letter is therefore directed specifically to the Gentile believers there (11:13).

**Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**Everybody Knows The Truth (Rom 1:18-20)**

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.
20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

**The truth of revealed wrath (18)**

*Wrath that is poured out daily by the righteous judge (Ps 7:11)*

11 God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.

*Wrath that makes the recipient an object of horror (Ezek 5:15)*

15 You will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the Lord have spoken.
Wrath in response to detestable conduct (Ezek 7:8)

8 I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you; I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices.

Wrath because of stubbornness and an unrepentant heart (Rom 2:5)

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Wrath on those who are disobedient (Eph 5:6)

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Wrath on those who belong to man's sinful and earthly nature (Col 3:5-6)

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

The truth of revealed glory (19-20)

God's glory is revealed in the Heavens (Ps 8:1)

1 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

God's glory is revealed in the work of His hands (Ps 19:1)

19 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

God's glory is revealed in all the earth (Ps 57:5)

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

God's glory is revealed in His sanctuary (Ps 96:6)

6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

God's glory is revealed because God is the King of glory (Ps 24:7-10)

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty — he is the King of glory. Selah

God's glory is revealed so that man will worship Him (Ps 29:1-2)

1 Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

God's glory is revealed so that all authorities will revere God (Ps 102:15)

15 The nations will fear the name of the Lord, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.

God's glory is revealed because God's glory is great (Ps 138:5)

5 May they sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord is great.

Result Of Rejection Of The Truth (Rom 1:21-23)

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.
Darkened hearts (21)

Darkened hearts as part of His punishment (Deut 28:28-30)
28 The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. 29 At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you.

Darkened hearts because Satan has caused a darkness over people (Isa 60:1-2)
1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Darkened hearts because of a lack of knowledge (Acts 26:15-18)
15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Darkened hearts because of seeking salvation in the wrong ways (Rom 11:7-10)
7 What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, 8 as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day." 9 And David says: "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. 10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever."

Darkened hearts because of rejecting God (1 Peter 2:7-9)
7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for.

Foolish wisdom (22)

Foolish wisdom because of using human intelligence (1 Cor 1:18-21)
18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Foolish wisdom because true wisdom comes from God (Eph 1:6-9)
6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

Foolish wisdom does not glorify God (Rom 1:20-23)
20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.
Foolish wisdom does not understand spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14)

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Foolish wisdom is of the devil (John 8:44)

44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Foolish wisdom perverts the ways of God (Acts 13:10)

10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?

Foolish wisdom comes from ungodly lusts, and causes divisions (Jude 17-19)

17 But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. 18 They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." 19 These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

Idolatry (23)

Idolatry through worshiping an image of a person (Deut 4:15-16)

15 You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, 16 so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman,

Idolatry through sacrificing to idols of surrounding nations (Exodus 34:15)

15 "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices.

Idolatry through rebellion (1 Sam 15:23)

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."

Idolatry through making corrupt idols (Deut 4:25)

25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time — if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God and provoking him to anger,

Idolatry that leads to death (Deut 30:17-18)

17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

God’s Reaction To Rejection Of The Truth (Rom 1:24-32)

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,
25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.
27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.
28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;
29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,  
30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 
31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;  
32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Allows unnatural relations (24-27)

Unnatural relations related to homosexuality or lesbianism (Lev 18:22-24)

22 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. 23 "Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

Unnatural relations related to sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:13)

13 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Unnatural relations that are sins against one's own body (1 Cor 6:18)

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

Unnatural relations that need to be controlled (1 Thess 4:4)

4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable,

Unnatural relations that brings destruction (Gen 19:4-5)

4 Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — surrounded the house. 5 They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."

Unnatural relations deemed as detestable to God (1 Kings 14:24)

24 There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.

Allows debased minds (28-31)

Debased minds that are depraved (2 Tim 3:8)

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth — men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.

Debased minds that have been blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:4)

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Debased minds that are sinful and hostile to God (Rom 8:6-9)

6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Debased minds that have no understanding (Jer 4:22)

22 "My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good."
Debased minds that have given a delusion (2 Thess 2:9-12)

9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie

Provides righteous judgment (32)

A righteous judgment that will bring everything to light (1 Cor 4:5)

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

A righteous judgment that judges man's secrets (Rom 2:16)

16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

A righteous judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-33)

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

A righteous judgment entrusted to Jesus by God (John 5:21-22)

21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

A righteous judgment that all will stand before (Rom 14:10)

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

A righteous judgment that judges what was done in the body (2 Cor 5:10)

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

A righteous judgment that is destined for man (Heb 9:27)

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

To understand Romans 1:18-32, we must learn how it fits into the context into which it has been placed. We must see how it follows Paul's teaching in Romans 1:1-17, and how it paves the way for 2:1-29. In particular, it is essential that we see the distinct message and emphasis of 1:18-32 in relationship to 2:1-29. That we shall endeavor to do as we consider the structure of this text.

There is a clear change evident in Paul’s teaching at Romans 2:1 and following, as compared with 1:18-32. First, there is the change from commending sin to condemning it. In Romans 1:32, Paul speaks of those who “give hearty approval” to those who practice sin. Now, in Romans 2:1, Paul describes those who condemn those who practice sin.

Second, there is the shift from a general indictment of sinners in Romans 1 to the specific indictment of individuals as sinners in chapter 2. In Romans 1:18-32, we find the more indirect pronouns such as “they,” “their,” and “them.” In Romans 2:1 and following, Paul becomes more specific, pointing his finger at “you.”
The condemnation of all mankind in 1:18-32 seems to be of man collectively, while the condemnation of chapter 2 is much more individual, based upon the revelation each man has received. In chapter 1, Paul seems to be laying a foundation; in chapter 2, he zeroes in for the “kill.” One can almost see the heads of Paul’s readers nodding in agreement with Paul’s indictment of “them,” while their eyes begin to pop out in chapter 2 when Paul becomes personal and individual, turning to “you.”

The sin of all mankind is described in more general terms in chapter 1. Man’s sin is the rejection of that which God has revealed. In chapter 2, man’s sin is viewed in an individual context, in terms of what God has revealed to each person and in terms of what that person has done with what he knows.

**Third, there is the shift from the present wrath of God in chapter 1 to the future wrath of God in chapter 2.**

Throughout 1:18-32, the wrath of God is described as being presently revealed. In chapter 2, Paul speaks of God’s wrath as that which is future:

> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Romans 2:5).

The wrath of God is thereby separated into two different categories: (a) that wrath which is presently being revealed against sinners, and (b) that coming wrath of God which is yet to be revealed against sinners. The differences between these two dimensions of divine wrath are explored later in this message.

These are the major contrasts I find between Romans 1 and 2. Let us pause to consider a distinction which some find between these two chapters, but which I do not accept. Some think Romans 1:18-32 is describing the condemnation of Gentiles, while in chapter 2 Paul focuses on the condemnation of the Jews as sinners. I disagree with this analysis of Romans 1 and 2. Instead, I find Paul indicting both Jews and Greeks in both Romans 1 and Romans 2. There are a number of reasons for my conclusion which are briefly summarized below for your consideration.

1. **Paul’s choice of words at the beginning of both major sections (the first section is Romans 1:18-32, and the second is Romans 2:1-29) are deliberately general and universal, so that both Jews and Gentiles are included:**

   For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18, emphasis mine).

   Therefore, you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things (Romans 2:1).

2. **In 1:18-32, neither Jews nor Gentiles are singled out by name; in 2:1-29, Paul refers to both Jews and Gentiles.**

3. **The indictment of 1:19-20 would seem to apply most directly to the Gentile heathen, while that of 1:32 seems to be aimed more directly at the Jews.** The minimal amount of revelation is that which can be seen from creation. This is referred to in 1:20. The greatest revelation of God’s character is that found in the Law, and this is referred to in 1:32. Thus, everyone from the bush man in some remote jungle to the unbelieving Jewish Rabbi is under divine sentence for rejecting the revelation which God has given him. Romans 1:18-32 therefore indicts both the Jews and the Gentiles—and not just the Gentiles.

4. **The Bible does not divide sin into “Gentile sins” and “Jewish sins.”** If one reads the history of Israel and especially the indictments of the Old Testament prophets, it quickly becomes apparent that Israel’s great failure was in not being a “holy,” “peculiar” people. They were instead constantly imitating the sins of the Gentiles, including those which seemed most abominable to the Jews. Many of the sins of Romans 1:18-32 are those for which the Israelites were rebuked by the prophets and chastened by God.
The distinction between the Gentiles and the Jews is not the key to understanding the structure of chapters 1 and 2. Three repeated concepts provide us with the key to understanding the structure of Romans 1:18-32. The terms are not always identical, but the concepts are the same. These three concepts are:

- God reveals something about Himself to men
- Man rejects this revelation
- God gives men over to their sin

Given this frame of reference, we can see the structure of Romans 1:18-32 unfolding:

- General statement: Divine revelation rejected by man — 1:18-23
- God gave men over to their natural lusts — 1:24-25
- God gave men over to unnatural lusts — 1:26-27
- God gave men over to their corrupt thinking — 1:28-32

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/2-present-wrath-god-romans-115-32)

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Paul described the worst of pagan society as his fellow Jews were accustomed to seeing it. But Paul’s description is also very close to the way Israel’s prophets had condemned Israel for similar denial of God. As noted in the past, one finger that points at others leaves the rest of the fingers pointing back at ourselves. In the end, none can condemn others without condemning oneself. Realizing that, we can do nothing except to receive and rely on the mercy of God, who invites us back to him by his grace.

**Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

Our text is embedded in one of the most sobering contexts of the whole Bible. The context states that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (Rom. 1:18). God's wrath is His settled judgment against sinners. It is not to be thought of as some kind of emotional outburst but is rather the state of mind of the eternal God as He considers the world's sin. His wrath is clearly revealed throughout the pages of Scripture as we contemplate the punishment on Adam (Gen. 3:17-19) and other striking moments of God's judgment, such as the Great Flood and the Tower of Babel. God's concern is humanity's ungodliness and impiety, its lack of respect for Him, and its unrighteousness, all of which involve the breaking of God's holy commands. The truth of God's character and presence hovers over humanity, even though humanity often seeks to ignore or suppress this truth. No matter how much men and women seek to evade the truth about God, He can be clearly perceived and understood through the world He has made. Literally, His "invisible things" are clear. By any measure of reflection, human beings, who have a God-given capacity to think and reason, are able to deduce that there is a God and that He is eternal and powerful. The world we live in was obviously created as a wondrous home for humanity. It displays God's power and His loving care. Who would not want to know such a God? Yet, as we see, the sinful heart of humanity turns from this knowledge and refuses to bow the knee to God the Creator. To one degree or another, all of us are guilty of this. The most sobering words of this passage come right at the end of Rom 1:20: "They are without excuse." God holds humanity accountable for the knowledge He has revealed about Himself. Since we can understand Him, we should turn to Him and are without excuse if we do not.

Whoever, and that means all of us, responds perversely to the knowledge of God falls under God's wrathful judgment. The improper response to the knowledge of God is sufficient to eternally condemn any and all sinners. There is no excuse, which upon reflection is a remarkably absolute statement. What shall we do? How can we rectify this terrible situation? It can be done only through the Lord Jesus Christ, as we become conscious of our rejection of God and of our many sins and as we are led to seek the Saviour. That God still loves us and provided a Redeemer for us, despite our sinful response to the knowledge of God, is an astonishing gift of His grace. His cross provided a complete and perfect atonement for our rejection of God. By His grace, we can be redeemed and God's wrath set aside. We like to sing the old hymn about God's grace that says that grace is greater than all our sins. Despite the enormous consequences of the rejection of God and His truth, the Saviour is able to overcome it all for us.
**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

1. Our sin is a clear choice to reject what God has revealed to all about Himself (Rom. 1:18-19)
2. God reveals Himself through His work and through His power in our lives (vs. 20)
3. People are deceived and begin to create their own idols when they reject what they know of the true God (vss. 21-23)
4. If we continue to refuse God, He will act according to our choice and abandon us to our own evil minds (vs. 28)
5. Rejection of God's truth and grace will always take us deeper into sin than we would imagine (vss. 29-31)
6. Be careful not to sin by condoning the evil of others (vs. 32)